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SUBJECT Assessment of William Casey's Role in Reagan Presidency

RENEE MONTAGNE: William Casey died today -- yesterday.
Daniel Schorr has these thoughts about the role Casey played in
Ronald Reagan's presidency.

J DANIEL SCHORR: President Reagan had dreams, and William
Casey turned them into plans. Casey was the Reagan alter ego,
the activist for a passive President, the surrogate Rambo who
knew how to make things happen, the covert side of an overt
political person.

Long before he became President, Reagan would listen by
the hour while Casey regaled him with stories of derring-do from
his OSS days in World War II. Casey could have had almost any
job in the Reagan Cabinet or the White House, but he agreed that
his natural mission was Central Intelligence, and for that
mission the position was raised to Cabinet rank.

It was Casey who made the Reagan Doctrine operational,
arranging the arming of guerrillas in Afghanistan, the mining of
the harbors of Nicaragua, the efforts to destabilize Qaddafi in
Libya.

The Administration's approach to Iran started with
Casey's concern about his Beirut station chief, William Buckley,
kidnaped and reportedly tortured to reveal secrets. And it was
casey, in the end, who got the President to say yes to arms for
Iran when Secretary Shultz and Weinberger strenuously counseled
no.

With the President's support, Casey would go outside
channels and set up his own lines of authority: in effect, a
covert operation against the U.S. Government. The real chain of

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command for the Iranian arms and Contra supply operations ran from President Reagan to Casey to Colonel Oliver North. It was Casey's credentials that made North the most powerful lieutenant colonel in the world. It was Casey who decided to evade the CIA's responsibility to report to Congress, to set up an alternate mechanism under North and ordered some of his CIA officers to cooperate with it.

Often the head of the National Security Council, Robert McFarlane, later Admiral John Poindexter, would be uncomfortably aware that North was getting his orders from elsewhere, and elsewhere usually turned out to be Casey.

It was Casey who could really have told us what the President knew and when he knew it. But the old covert warrior, the best mumblar in the business, would probably have never told us, anyway.